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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HAVANA 00257

DEPT FOR ARA/CCA

USIA FOR AR, P/G, VOA/MR, R/SE FOR GRANT, R/AR FOR LLACH

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PGOV PREL CU
SUBJECT: CASTRO'S CREED "SOCIALISM OR DEATH"

REF: EVANS/GRANT TELCON 1/2/90

¶1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

¶2. WITH THE FALL OF EACH EASTERN EUROPEAN COMMUNIST LEADER CASTRO'S DEFENSE OF SOCIALISM HAS SEEMED TO BECOME MORE RIGID. SHORTLY BEFORE EACH COMMUNIST HEAD LEFT OFFICE, CASTRO MADE AN OFFICIAL GESTURE INDICATING SOME MEASURE OF CONFIDENCE IN HIS REGIME. IN ROMANIA'S CASE, THE GOC SIGNED A TRADE AGREEMENT WITH CEAUSESCU'S REPS JUST WEEKS BEFORE HIS DEMISE. AS THESE COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS GO, CASTRO'S CREED "SOCIALISM OR DEATH" TAKES ON A MORE OMINOUS MEANING ESPECIALLY FOLLOWING THE BLOODLETTING IN ROMANIA.

CUBAN OFFICIALS EXPLAIN THAT FOR CUBA, IF FOR NO OTHER NATION, SOCIALISM IS INEXTRICABLY LINKED WITH INDEPENDENCE AND SOVEREIGNTY, NATIONAL IDENTITY AND NATIONAL CULTURE. WITHOUT SOCIALISM CUBA, IN OTHER WORDS, WOULD BE EITHER OVERTAKEN OR ABSORBED BY THE GIANT BOURGEOIS CAPITALIST STATE TO THE NORTH. THE REAL PURPOSE OF THE SLOGAN, OF COURSE, IS TO MAKE AN ENEMY OF ANYONE WHO DOES NOT AGREE WITH CASTRO, TO PAINT ANY OPPOSITION TO SOCIALISM AS TREASON, AND TO BUILD POPULAR SUPPORT FOR INTOLERANCE AND SUPPRESSION OF DISSENT.

¶3. WE HOPE THE DEPARTMENT, USIA AND OTHER USG AGENCIES WILL FIND WAYS TO FOCUS WORLD ATTENTION ON THIS RATHER BIZARRE SLOGAN. "PATRIA O MUERTE," WHICH CASTRO ALSO STILL EMPLOYS, RAISES THE IMAGE OF DEFENDING ONES COUNTRY AGAINST ALIEN INVADERS. "LIBERTY OR DEATH" SUGGESTS A CHOICE BETWEEN TYRANNY AND FREEDOM. BUT "SOCIALISMO O MUERTE" SIMPLY SUGGESTS A STARK CHOICE BETWEEN ACCEPTING A MARXIST SOCIETY OR ELSE DYING. THIS INTERPRETATION IS REINFORCED BY THE CONTEXT AND INDEED THE TARGET OF CASTRO'S SLOGAN, I.E., DECISIONS BY INDEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES TO INSTITUTE SWEEPING DEMOCRATIC REFORMS THAT HAVE DRAMATICALLY ALTERED OR COMPLETELY DISCARDED MARXIST-LENINIST SYSTEMS.

¶4. WE WOULD HOPE THAT INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS, AND PRIVATE AS WELL AS GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS WOULD BEGIN TO QUESTION THE MANICHEAN CRY OF THE CUBAN LEADER. FOLLOWING ARE SOME SAMPLE QUESTIONS THAT COULD BE POSED:

-- DOES "SOCIALISMO O MUERTE" MEAN THE CUBAN PEOPLE HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO ACCEPT SOCIALISM NOW AND FOR ALL TIME?

-- DOES ANY CUBAN HAVE THE RIGHT PEACEFULLY TO ESPOUSE ANOTHER POLITICAL-ECONOMIC SYSTEM; CAN HE MAKE SPEECHES, PRINT ARTICLES, HAVE MEETINGS, ETC. TO PROMOTE AN ALTERNATIVE TO SOCIALISM?

-- CAN A CUBAN WHO IS OPPOSED TO SOCIALISM AND IN FAVOR OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY BE A LOYAL CITIZEN?

-- WHAT CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS DOES SUCH A PERSON HAVE?

-- IF A SOCIALIST REGIME SUCH AS THAT OF CEAUSESCU SEES ITSELF ON THE VERGE OF BEING OVERTHROWN, DOES IT HAVE THE RIGHT AND THE DUTY TO USE FORCE AGAINST CIVILIAN, UNARMED DEMONSTRATORS IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN SOCIALISM?

-- DO YOU BELIEVE THAT SOCIALISM REPRESENTS A LINEAL PROGRESSION OF HISTORY AND THAT ONCE A COUNTRY IS SOCIALIST IT MUST ALWAYS REMAIN SOCIALIST?

-- DO YOU STILL SUPPORT THE WARSAW PACT INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN 1968 AS HISTORICALLY CORRECT?

-- WAS THE 1968 INVASION AN IMPLEMENTATION OF "SOCIALISMO O MUERTE"?

-- IS THERE ANY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BREZHNEV DOCTRINE AND "SOCIALISMO O MUERTE"?

-- WOULD YOU PREFER TO SEE CUBA SINK UNDER THE OCEAN THAN TO SEE IT BECOME NON-SOCIALIST UNDER A POPULAR MOVEMENT?

-- YOU SAY SOCIALISM IS SYNONYMOUS WITH NATIONALISM IN NBA. DOES THIS MEAN THAT MEXICO, PERU AND OTHER NON-SOCIALIST LATIN COUNTRIES ARE NOT EQUALY NATIONALIST AS CUBA?

-- WHO HAS DECIDED SOCIALISM IS SYNONYMOUS WITH NATIONALISM IN CUBA? CAN ANY CUBAN OPENLY DISPUTE THAT?

-- IF THE UNITED STATES BECAME SOCIALIST (COMMUNIST), WOULD IT THEN BE POSSIBLE FOR CUBA TO BECOME NON-SOCIALIST? WOULD THE SLOGAN "SOCIALISMO O MUERTE" STILL BE VALID?

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15. THESE QUESTIONS COULD BE POSED IN AN OPEN LETTER TO CASTRO SUCH AS THE RECENT ONE ON A PLEBISCITE SIGNED BY 400 INTELLECTUALS. OTHER VEHICLES COULD INCLUDE: DISCUSSION PANELS ON RADIO MARTI; STATEMENTS BY HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS, AND ARTICLES BY PROMINENT INDIVIDUALS AND JOURNALISTS. WE WOULD ALSO EXPECT THAT "SOCIALISMO B MUERTE" WOULD MAKE AN INTERESTING TOPIC FOR DISCUSSIONS IN GENEVA.

TAYLOR